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Letter dated 29 August 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 29 August 1997, addressed to you by His Excellency Mr. Aytuğ Plümer, Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter could be circulated as a document of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 58, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Huseyin E. ÇELEM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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ANNEX

Letter dated 29 August 1997 from Mr. Aytuğ Plümer addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to refer to the letter dated 21 August 1997 addressed to you by the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations (A/51/964-S/1997/656).

The letter in question merely repeats the unfounded allegations contained in an earlier letter addressed to you by the Greek Cypriot representative at the United Nations (A/51/962-S/1997/645) of 14 August 1997). These renewed allegations, as part of the ongoing campaign of defamation and misinformation against the Turkish Cypriot side, do not merit a new detailed reply, as they have already been emphatically refuted in our letter of 25 August 1997 addressed to you (A/51/966-S/1997/666). It would suffice to say that the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus takes pride in its continuous efforts to protect the cultural heritage of Northern Cyprus, utilizing its limited resources in the most effective way in maintaining and restoring all sites and monuments, irrespective of their historical and religious origins. This is in stark contrast to the anachronistic policies of the Greek Cypriot administration and of Greece, where the Turkish Muslim community in western Thrace continues to be subjected to persecution and discrimination by the Greek authorities, and Turkish monuments are deliberately destroyed.

It is hypocritical that the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations should level false accusations against the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on the subject of protection of cultural heritage, when it is a well-known fact that Greece itself is engaged in a policy of forcible assimilation of the Turkish minority in western Thrace, coupled with systematic pillaging and obliteration of Turkish monuments. Almost all of the Ottoman Turkish monuments, shrines and relics have either been wilfully destroyed, desecrated or left to disintegrate. The basic rights of the Turkish Muslim community, including the freedoms of worship and education, which are guaranteed under international treaties, continue to be denied and violated by the Greek authorities. They are denied even the basic right to elect their own religious leaders. Religious officials from Turkey are barred from entry to western Thrace, even for the duration of the holy month of Ramadan. We note with profound indignation that such a policy of systematic discrimination, suppression and persecution of the Turkish community in western Thrace can be perpetrated openly and unabatedly by Greece, a State member of the European Union, in defiance of international agreements and all norms of justice. As the Turkish Cypriot side, we cannot help but remind all concerned of the deplorable conditions in which the Turks of Greece have found themselves today.

Greece cannot escape responsibility for these actions by making false complaints against the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and by trying to project a distorted image of the current situation on the island.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 58, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Aytuğ PLUMER
Representative
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus